

Baden-Württemberg



Baden-Württemberg is one of Germany's most popular holiday regions, rivalled only by Bavaria in its natural landscapes and range of outdoor activities. Most of the state is covered by the fabled Black Forest (Schwarzwald), a vast nature playground whose peaks, lakes and cuckoo clocks are irresistible to hikers, cyclists, bathers, boaters and punctual people who find quarter-hourly mechanical bird calls charming rather than annoying.

One of the country's most prosperous states, Baden-Württemberg was created in 1951 out of three historic regions: Baden, Württemberg and Hohenzollern. Further back in history, much of its southern reaches were part of Swabia (Schwaben) and many people here still speak Swabian (Schwäbisch), a melodic dialect that other Germans find largely incomprehensible.

In the centre, the capital Stuttgart is the home of Mercedes-Benz and Porsche, and a wealth of urban pleasures. A bit to the east are Schwäbisch Hall, a medieval gem, and, on the banks of the Danube, the architecturally audacious city of Ulm. The spas of Baden-Baden have been soothing the stresses of modern and ancient life since Roman times.

The state is also home to three famous and ancient university cities. In Heidelberg, students still gather in ancient beer halls while Tübingen, with its narrow lanes and hilltop fortress, positively oozes charm. Flowery Freiburg, not far from the Swiss border, makes an ideal base for exploring the Black Forest and the rolling vineyards of Breisach, on the French frontier.

Lake Constance (Bodensee), whose southern shore – overlooked by the Alps – is in Switzerland and Austria, is a huge draw, especially in summer.

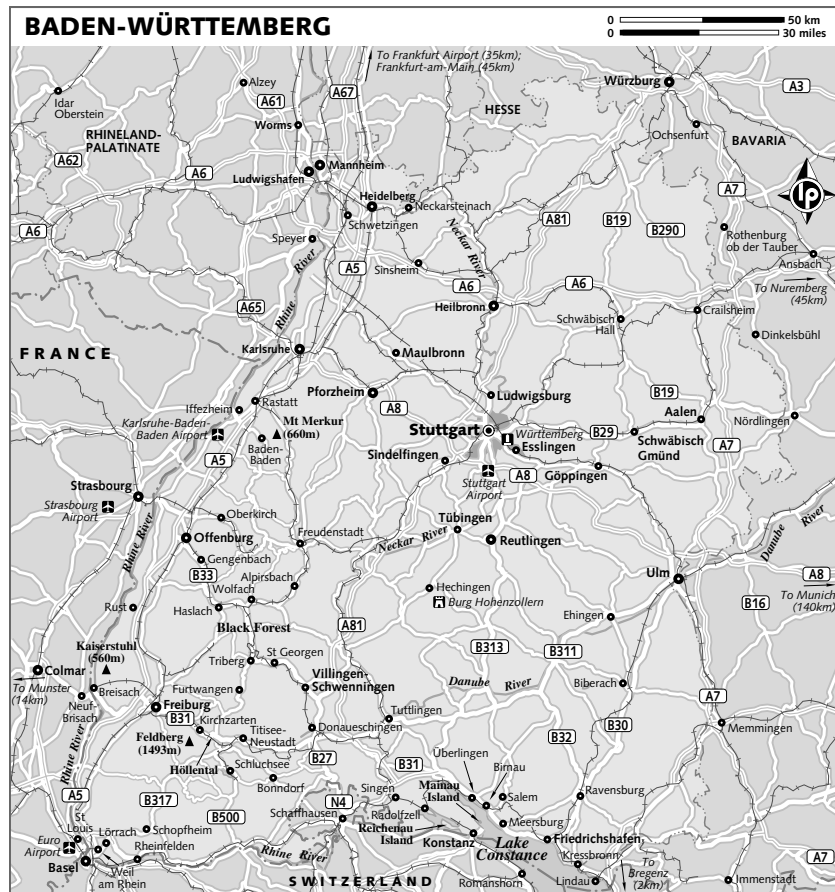
HIGHLIGHTS

- **Art and Automobiles** Explore outstanding museums and classy shops in Stuttgart (p393)
- **Snow and Eis** Admire the snow-capped Alps and savour ice cream (*Eis*) with strudel at a lakefront café on Lake Constance (p452)
- **Warm Watery Indulgence** Soak in an ornate 19th-century Baden-Baden spa (p434)
- **Back to the Middle Ages** Explore the medieval old town and ancient castle in the university city of Tübingen (p423)
- **Hell's Valley** Hoof it, train it or floor it through the Höllental (Hell's Valley, p449) in the Southern Black Forest



■ POPULATION: 10.7 MILLION

■ AREA:



Activities

HIKING

Baden-Württemberg is crisscrossed by walking and hiking trails too numerous to count, many of them through forests, along rivers or around lakes. Local tourist offices sell maps and can suggest suitable day hikes.

CYCLING

Baden-Württemberg is a cyclists' paradise, with thousands of kilometres of paved bike paths. Those with plenty of watery views include the following:

Bodensee-Weg Goes all the way around Lake Constance.
Donautal-Radweg (www.donau-radweg.info, in German) Follows the mighty Danube from the unexciting town of Donaueschingen (65km east of Freiburg) to Ulm (190km northeast of Donaueschingen), Vienna, Budapest and beyond.

Neckartal-Radweg (www.neckartal-radweg.de, in German) Follows the Neckar River for 357km from Villingen-Schwenningen northward (more or less) to Tübingen, Stuttgart and Heidelberg.

Rheintal-Weg Goes along the Rhine from Konstanz westward to Basel and then northward via Freiburg (or Breisach) to Baden-Baden, Heidelberg, Mannheim and beyond.

Veloroute Rhein Follows the Rhine along all of its left bank (in France and then Germany) and most of the right bank from Basel northward to Mannheim (415km).

Getting There & Around

Stuttgart airport (www.stuttgart-airport.com), Baden-Württemberg's largest, is a major hub for the discount airline **German Wings** (www.germanwings.com). Frankfurt airport is about 75km north of Mannheim. Other useful airports include

the **EuroAirport** (www.euroairport.com), which serves Freiburg as well as the Swiss city of Basel and the French city of Mulhouse; **Karlsruhe-Baden-Baden airport** (Baden Airpark; www.badenairpark.de); **Friedrichshafen airport** (www.fly-away.de); and **Strasbourg airport** (www.strasbourg.aeroport.fr) in France, across the Rhine from the Northern Black Forest.

Trains, trams and/or buses serve almost every city, town and mountain village in this chapter. Public transport across the Black Forest can be pretty slow, and long-distance trips (such as from Freiburg to Tübingen or Konstanz) may require several changes.

STUTTGART

☎ 0711 / pop 589,000

Perhaps best known as the headquarters of Mercedes-Benz and Porsche, Stuttgart has a number of first-rate art collections and two museums that are sure to set the pulse of the motor-minded racing. Blessed with an air of relaxed prosperity and a keen sense of style, the city is one of the greenest in Europe – not only is it well-endowed with parks, but it even has its own vineyards! The shopping, restaurant, cultural and nightlife scenes are all vibrant, if upmarket.

Stuttgart began as a stud farm ('*Stuotgarten*', hence the name) on the Nesenbach Stream around AD 950. By 1160 it was a booming trade centre, and in the early 14th century it became the royal seat of the Württemberg family. After WWII, the city's architectural treasures were painstakingly reconstructed.

ORIENTATION

The main pedestrian shopping street, Königstrasse, stretches southwest from the well-tended Hauptbahnhof (train station). Public

squares on or near Königstrasse include Schlossplatz and Schillerplatz. The three sections of the Schlossgarten (a grassy park) stretch northeastward from Schlossplatz almost 4km to the Neckar River. The district of Bad Cannstatt straddles the Neckar River about 3km northeast of the Hauptbahnhof.

Steep grades are common on Stuttgart's hillsides – more than 500 city streets end in *Stäffele* (staircases).

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Wittwer (☎ 250 70; Königstrasse 30) A bookshop with foreign-language and travel sections.

Cultural Centres

Deutsch-Amerikanisches Zentrum (German-American Center; ☎ 228 180; www.daz.org; Charlottenplatz 17; ☎ 2-6pm Tue-Thu) Promotes German-American relations.

Internet Access

Café Naser (in the Hauptbahnhof; per hr €5; ☎ 6am-10pm) Up the stairs behind track 4.

City Call & Internet Center (Eberhardstrasse 14; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, 11am-midnight Sun & holidays)

Cyber Café (Klett Passage; per hr €2; ☎ 9am-11pm)

Level One Cyber Bar (Königstrasse 22; per hr €4.50; ☎ 9am-midnight Mon-Sat, noon-midnight Sun) A stylish internet café in the basement of a cinema.

Laundry

SB-Waschsalon Trieb (☎ 5am-midnight) Self-service laundry in the arcade behind (just south of) the tourist office.

Medical Services

Ärztliche Bereitschaft (☎ 262 8012; Böheimstrasse 37; ☎ 7pm-7am, 7am-7pm Sat, Sun & holidays) A doctor's office inside Marien-Hospital, which is 3km southwest of

DISCOUNT TICKETS

The three-day **Stuttcard** (€12) gets you free entry to most public museums as well as discounts on cultural events and leisure activities, including the tourist office's guided tours. The **Stuttcard Plus** (€17.50) also affords unlimited bus, tram and metro travel within the city, including to and from the airport.

If you have a hotel reservation, for €9 you can get a three-day ticket good for unlimited public transport usage within the city limits (valid for an adult and two children up to age 17). A version good for public transport throughout the entire metropolitan area costs €12.30. They are generally available at hotel reception desks.

All four passes can be purchased at the tourist office, including the airport branch.